

Meeting Summary

US 29 South Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #14

Wednesday, November 1, 2017, 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Place - Spring Room, Silver Spring MD

Participants

CAC Members (X for in attendance, blank for regrets)			
Alan Bowser	X	Tom Lansworth	
Ilhan Cagri		Tracey Lewis	
Barbara Ditzler		Anita Morrison	X
Sean Emerson	X	Dan Reed	X
Roberta Faul-Zeitler	X	Herb Simmons	
Brian Feit	X	Tina Slater	X
Dan Figueroa		Brad Stewart	X
Avi Halpert	X	Mel Tull	X
Ken Jones (central)	X		
Linda Keenan	X		
Members of the Public		Affiliation	
Joel Ryerson			
Alicia Bravo		Councilmember Hucker's office	
Melvyn Greberman		SSLAC HHS Health & Wellness Group	
Jim Williamson			
Harriet Quinn		Civic Federation	

Staff

Michael Weinberger, Meeting Facilitator
Joana Conklin, MCDOT
Corey Pitts, Project Manager, MCDOT
Darcy Buckley, MCDOT
Dan Hibbert, MCDOT

Rick Kiegel, Consultant Project Manager
William Shuldiner, Facilitator Assistant
Alison Scott, Engineer, RK&K
Raulf Cheng, Engineer, RK&K

Welcome

The meeting commenced at 6:35 pm.

Michael Weinberger, the meeting facilitator from Foursquare ITP, welcomed the CAC members and thanked them for attending the meeting. He explained that the meeting would address the preliminary design of potential BRT stations, also referred to as the 35 percent design. He gave a brief update on the public outreach efforts for the project and informed CAC members about two community roundtable events that had taken place in October. At these meetings, the US 29 BRT Project team engaged with the public to better understand how best to improve the local bus service connecting to and operating along US 29 once BRT service begins on the corridor.

Preliminary Station Design Update

Michael introduced Rick Kiegel, the US 29 BRT Consultant Project Manager, to give updates on the preliminary station design. Rick informed the CAC members that the preliminary design was due to be completed at the end of November and that this phase includes the civil design and stormwater management measures. The project will then move on to final design, which is scheduled for completion in Fall 2018.

Rick introduced the activity and invited the group to view aerial images of each station location. The project team had iPads equipped with Google Earth and pictures of the stations from the ground to supplement the aerial images. CAC members were invited to ask the project team any questions or provide them with comments on the preliminary design.

Preliminary Station Design Activity

Silver Spring Transit Center

Although the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC) is the southernmost BRT station, it will not be a location where BRT vehicles remain between routes (a “layover” location), since the BRT service is intended to begin and end in Burtonsville or Briggs Chaney respectively. BRT buses will enter the Silver Spring Transit Center from Ramsey Avenue and stop at platforms 229 and 230 (which will be combined to accommodate the larger BRT vehicles). The new BRT station within the SSTC may include a 12-inch-high platform. Benches and three off-board fare collection machines would be located behind the platform.

Comments:

- CAC member suggested displaying the arrival times for other bus routes on the BRT Stations' real-time arrival screens.
- CAC member noted the importance of ensuring articulated buses could turn into the transit center on the second level.
- CAC members expressed concern that the only existing elevator is across the transit center from the proposed BRT station. [Note: It was later determined that there are two elevators in the center area of the transit center and that the proposed Purple Line station, located near the BRT station, will also have an elevator.]

Questions:

Question (Q): *CAC member asked if the bus would exit the transit center directly onto Wayne Avenue and then turn right onto US 29.*

Response (R): Rick responded that Montgomery County has decided to install a park and a bike lane at the northeastern corner of Wayne Avenue and US 29, as well as prohibit the right turn from Wayne Avenue to US 29. For this reason, the BRT service will exit the transit center onto Ramsey Avenue, before turning right onto Wayne Avenue, left on Georgia Avenue, and right onto US 29.

Q: *CAC members asked if the BRT service would be timed in the coordination with future Purple Line service.*

R: Rick informed them that BRT service is not constrained to an existing schedule but simply provides service as quickly as possible. It will be difficult to coordinate arrivals between BRT and Purple Line service exactly. However, because of the frequency of both services, passengers would likely never wait very long to transfer between the two services.

Fenton Street

Southbound Platform: This platform will be located at the northwest corner of US 29 and Fenton Street where the sidewalk widens to approximately 15 feet. The platform will be constructed of concrete and will be integrated with the sidewalk with ramps to facilitate the transition from the sidewalk up to the platform. The station will be built in front of an existing retaining wall, but will not include a canopy because of the limited amount of space, leaving the BRT station marker as the only vertical element of the station. This station will be the only station in the system that does not have fare collection machines, so those wanting to board at Fenton Street going southbound will be able to travel to the SSTC for free.

Northbound Platform: This platform will be at the northeast corner of US 29 and Fenton Street. Since a full-length platform (65 feet) would block access to the businesses in this area and may cause drainage problems, this platform will be shortened to a length of 25 feet. Located in the

public right of way, this station will offer level boarding at the back two doors of a BRT vehicle. The front door of the vehicle will still open, providing customers with the opportunity to board and alight in a non-level manner, meaning they would have to step up to the bus floor as they would on a typical local bus. The decision to serve the rear doors was made so that BRT vehicles did not block the intersection when stopping, as they would if the front doors aligned with the platform. The station will have two off-board fare collection machines and a marker. These elements will be located close to the roadway so they do not cause pedestrian congestion. No decision has been made regarding the installation of a small canopy.

Comments:

- CAC member suggested that the existing local bus stop on the other side of Fenton Street could be considered as a location for the BRT station. However, they acknowledged this may cause some operational problems.
- CAC member commented that it is important to ensure that BRT buses serving the northbound station do not block the MTA commuter bus stop.
- CAC member expressed concern that the BRT service could be affected by the amount of traffic on northbound US 29, especially since traffic sometimes increases behind local buses serving the station at the southeast corner of the intersection.
- CAC member commented that nearby businesses will need ample notice of construction so they can find new leases if they wish to.
- CAC member commented that the UPS store located on the eastern side of US 29 often has operations that may conflict with BRT and suggested converting certain parking spaces on US 29 into a loading and unloading zone to mitigate this problem.
- CAC member informed MCDOT that there is a revised streetscape plan that should be consulted before public art is developed.

Questions:

Q: CAC member asked about lighting at the southbound station platform.

R: MCDOT responded that lighting concepts have been developed but there needs to be a lighting analysis to determine what will be placed at the station. A meeting was held with WSSC Water and Pepco Electric to determine the impacts the project will have on certain utilities.

Q: CAC member inquired if this intersection would have Transit Signal Priority (TSP).

R: MCDOT responded that it would likely have TSP but that this system would only work in non-rush hours when there is less traffic on the road.

Q: CAC member asked which agency would be responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the Fenton Street station shelter.

R: MCDOT will maintain the BRT stations.

University Boulevard

The two BRT station platforms at the intersection of US 29 and University Boulevard will not be located directly across from each other because of physical constraints and traffic concerns. The northbound station will be located near the southeast corner of the intersection to avoid impacts to the Woodmoor Shopping Center and the United Methodist Church. The southbound station will be located on the northwest of the intersection to avoid delays caused by traffic waiting to access the Beltway ramp on the southern side of the intersection.

Northbound Platform: This platform will include landscaping improvements behind the platform. Like the stations in downtown Silver Spring, pedestrians will walk across the station while traveling on the sidewalk in this area. Unlike the southbound Fenton Street platform, there will be fare-collection machines and benches located toward the rear of the station, since this location has ample room to accommodate these amenities without impacting pedestrian access. This station will be in front of the local bus stop to place it closer to the signalized intersection to facilitate transfers to east-west bus routes and crossing US 29.

Comments:

- CAC member said this station will need more lighting than just the existing street lights.
- CAC member commented that snowplows often plow snow onto the sidewalks along US 29 in this area and that this should be taken into consideration when the BRT stations are planned.
- CAC members expressed concerns about pedestrians crossing US 29 in the middle of the block.
- CAC members raised concerns about traffic impacts between cars exiting the parking lot of Montgomery Blair High School, and BRT vehicles serving the station.
- CAC members suggested that the northbound local bus stop on US 29 could be removed and instead passengers could use the local bus stop on the other side of University Boulevard.

Southbound Platform: Four of the five businesses on the northwest corner of University Boulevard and US 29 are set below the grade of the existing sidewalk, making it difficult to construct a BRT station there and causing the station to be built farther north. The station will be in front of a parking lot that does not have access to US 29. However, the project team has heard that many people mistakenly exit the parking lot by driving over the sidewalk and onto US 29. For this reason, the BRT station will not only include landscaping but also a guardrail, to deter any drivers attempting to exit the parking lot in this way. This will potentially impact two informal (unmarked) spaces in the parking lot. The benches and fare-collection machines will be

located at the rear of the station to ensure that passengers do not need to wait for the bus near the roadway, although they will have the option if they chose to do so.

Comments:

- CAC members commented that many of the passengers using BRT at this location would likely be alighting rather than boarding because local bus service between University Boulevard and downtown Silver Spring is just as fast and there are many local bus routes on University Boulevard. For this reason, certain members suggested changing the planned BRT station into a shared stop with BRT and local bus service, or simply removing the BRT station from the area.
- CAC members said that the removal of parking spaces behind the southbound station could have an impact on the businesses on the corner.
- CAC members discussed the intersection just south of these stations at US 29 and Lanark Way and the possibility for a crosswalk and traffic light at the intersection to assist with pedestrian access.
- CAC members described how it is difficult to cross US 29 when traveling westbound on University Boulevard because of the traffic caused from people attempting to get on to the Beltway.
- CAC members requested that MCDOT examine the accident rates for the intersection because this may impact the bus operation.
- One CAC member asked if a walkthrough could be conducted by MCDOT so that members of local housing and civic associations could see the station areas.

Burnt Mills

Northbound Platform: Unlike other station locations, pedestrians will not walk across the station platform, but rather will be able to walk around it. The sidewalk will be located behind new landscaping and the station platform. This will not only be more convenient for pedestrians but will also provide more room for station amenities, such as benches and off-fare collection machines. Additionally, this station will have a bikeshare station. This station area will also include a relocated local bus stop, which will be moved just north of the BRT station. This relocation will also include a new, larger curbside boarding area.

Southbound Platform: Since there is a hill located behind the southbound Burnt Mills BRT platform location that limits the space for the sidewalk, the station platform will only be 13 feet wide. Like at many other stations in the system, pedestrians will have to walk through the platform if they use the sidewalk. However, the sidewalk connection will become narrower to align with the existing sidewalk. MCDOT has included substantial space at the rear of the

platform for benches and off-board fare collection machines to ensure that BRT riders do not block the path of pedestrians. There is also one utility pole at this station that will be relocated.

Questions:

Q: A CAC member asked if construction of the stations would occur in stages.

R: MCDOT informed CAC members that platforms at a single station would likely be built at once. Construction of the various stations along the corridor would likely be staged.

Oak Leaf Drive

For both the Oak Leaf Drive station platforms, MCDOT is attempting to relocate the minimal amount of utilities. Some will need to be relocated, however, and this is included in the project budget.

Southbound Platform: This platform will be located adjacent to the intersection of Oak Leaf Drive and Lockwood Drive. It will include a new bikeshare station with accompanying sidewalk/bike lane that will run behind the BRT station platform. There will also be stormwater management located along the southbound side of Lockwood Drive to reduce runoff from the concrete. Unlike other sidewalks that connect to the BRT station platform using a ramp, the sidewalk in this location will be 12 inches, or the same height as the platform, meaning that users can walk directly onto the platform from the sidewalk along the back of the platform.

Northbound Platform: This platform will require an existing local bus stop to be relocated just north of the new BRT station. The relocated local bus stop will include a new sidewalk section for convenient boarding. The BRT station will be located farther south of Oak Leaf Drive to avoid blocking the driveways of houses located along this section of the road. The station will be located near a house at the corner of Northwest Drive and Lockwood Drive but, because this house faces Northwest Drive, it will not create a physical or visual barrier.

White Oak Transit Center

The southbound platform will be located near two existing bus stops to create a continuous transit zone. This platform will also include a retaining wall. The northbound platform is 50 feet long, smaller than the standard length of 65 feet. This is to avoid blocking two driveways to the commercial buildings located at this part of Lockwood Drive.

Questions:

Q: CAC members asked if MCDOT was planning to remove certain local bus stops.

R: MCDOT staff replied that, while no stops would be removed, the frequency of local buses serving the stops may change.

Stewart Lane

The two station platforms at April Lane and Stewart Lane are uniquely designed to provide access for bicycles using the bike lane along Stewart Lane. The station platforms will be located between the curbside bicycle lane and the roadway, creating a “floating bus stop” to avoid conflicts between buses and bikes. After gathering community feedback on the floating bus stops constructed along Spring Street, MCDOT has designed the station with designated crossing points. There will also be a railing and new landscaping at the rear of each platform to prevent people from crossing the bike lane at locations other than the designated crossing points. The roadway between the two new station platforms will be resurfaced to reflect the new lane patterns and the installation of a new pedestrian island at the intersection of April Lane and Stewart Lane. One existing local bus stop on the southbound side of Lockwood Drive will be moved to accommodate the new bike lane and bikeshare station.

Tech Road

Unlike the stops located along Lockwood Drive, both BRT service patterns (bus lines) will serve this station.

Southbound Platform: The BRT vehicle will have the option to travel along the shoulder, allowing it to bypass traffic. The sidewalk will be built up to the BRT platform, to connect the platform with the intersection of Tech Road and US 29. There will also be a larger sidewalk that connects the station to the parking lot on the northwest corner of the intersection and to the new bikeshare station that will be installed.

Northbound Platform: This platform will include new landscaping behind the platform. A new sidewalk will also be built, connecting the station to Prosperity Drive and the new bikeshare station.

Castle Boulevard

This BRT station will be located at the intersection of Castle Boulevard and Castle Ridge Circle, on the west side of Castle Boulevard. MCDOT has decided to remove a curbside parking lane from this area to build the BRT station platform. However, there is a parking lot directly behind the new station which will provide options for vehicles wishing to park in the area. There will be only one station platform in this location and it will serve BRTs traveling in both directions. The bikeshare station at Castle Boulevard will be larger than those in other locations and will include 23 docks. MCDOT is considering this location for a floating bus stop, much like the BRT station at April Lane and Stewart Lane.

Briggs Chaney Park and Ride

This station will be the terminal BRT station for one of the BRT service patterns and will be used as a layover location. To accommodate this, the BRT project team will expand the bus portion of the Briggs Chaney Park and Ride to house multiple BRT vehicles at one time. This includes relocating the existing bus entrance slightly farther north in to what is currently landscaping. Some of this existing landscaping will remain, and new landscaping and stormwater management will be added to the area where the previous bus entrance was located. Additionally, a new sidewalk will be built along Gateshead Manor Way, behind the BRT station plaza, and a new bikeshare station will be installed between this sidewalk and the road. This sidewalk will be connected to the station platform by two other sidewalks. However, most of the land between the sidewalk and platform will remain designated for landscaping and stormwater management.

Because it is a layover station at the end of one of the BRT lines, the Briggs Chaney Park and Ride station will also feature an operator comfort station. This will be located at one end of the platform and will allow the operators to take bathroom breaks between operations.

Burtonsville Park and Ride

The Burtonsville Park and Ride Station will be located directly in front of the local bus stops. This station is also a terminal for a BRT service pattern, meaning buses will remain here between their operations. To ensure that these buses do not block traffic or other access to the Park and Ride, the station platforms will be built in a “sawtooth” pattern, with two platforms angled inward so that buses have a place to stop that is not in the roadway. This will require National Drive to be widened on one side so that there is enough space for BRT vehicles to pull in to the station and out of the roadway. The station will also feature a new pedestrian walkway between the BRT station and local bus stop, as well as new landscaping, a bikeshare station, and an operator comfort station. Once the buses leave the station, they will make a right turn onto the US 29 entrance ramp and begin service.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Michael thanked the group for their participation in the meeting and invited the CAC members to attend the US 29 Open Houses on November 15, 16, and 20. He explained that MCDOT staff would continue reviewing the BRT Station preliminary design and answering questions if people wanted to stay after the meeting. He concluded by reminding the CAC members that the next round of CAC meetings would take place in January and explained that MCDOT will get in touch with members closer to the next meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.